

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Case File No. AA-84549 (271000)
AK-040-03-EA-014

Applicant: North Tongass Community Club
P.O. 736
Ward Cove, Alaska 99928

Type of
Action: Sale of Reversionary Interest

Location: U. S. Survey No. 2343, Tract D-1, further described to be within
Section 32, T. 74 S., R. 90 E., Copper River Meridian.

Prepared By: Kathy Stubbs, Realty Specialist

Preparing
Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: December 11, 2003

I. INTRODUCTION

North Tongass Community Club (NTCC) proposes to purchase the Federal government's reversionary interest in a parcel of land located in Ketchikan, Alaska.

In 1960, NTCC, a non-profit corporation, acquired 1.48 acres of public land under the authority of the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act (43 U.S.C. 869) located within U.S. Survey No. 2343, Tract D-1, further described to be within Section 32, T. 74 S., R. 90 E., Copper River Meridian. These lands were within PLO 842 that eliminated the lands from the Tongass National Forest. The following encumbrances lie with the lands patented to NTCC:

- The BLM granted a highway right-of-way for North Tongass Highway to the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) containing approximately .52 acres through the above mentioned property. This highway was originally built in 1932 by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads and later was listed in the Omnibus Act (1959). The patent was made excepting this easement.
- NTCC is currently granting ADOT&PF an easement to realign the roadbed and construct a bike and pedestrian path. This project will encompass approximately .16 acres.

The remaining land after the project will be .80 acres for use of NTCC. Due to the terrain on the parcel, this only affords NTCC land for their building. Members will go elsewhere for parking. The foundation of the structure is rotting because of a stream re-alignment for highway improvement.

NTCC and the ADOT&PF approached BLM discussing the option of transfer title and change of use for the remaining parcel. Purchasing the reversionary interest allows NTCC to clear title and alleviates BLM's role in long-term compliance on these R&PP patented lands.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to facilitate the consolidation of ownership. Purchase of the reversionary interest will enable the NTCC to clear title for the lands. The land is an isolated parcel, difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands, and not needed for Federal purposes.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

No land use plan exists for this area. However, the environmental analysis assesses the impacts of the Proposed Action and provides a basis for a decision of the proposal 43 CFR 1610.8(b)(1).

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

BLM is authorized to sell land or interest in land under Section 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of October 21, 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1713). The Code of Federal Regulations, 43 CFR 2710.0-6(c)(3)(iii), allows for direct sale of certain lands. It provides that "Direct sale . . . may be used . . . where the lands are needed by State or local governments or non-profit corporations . . ."

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

A. Proposed Action:

NTCC proposes to purchase the Federal government's reversionary interest in lands described as U. S. Survey No. 2343, Alaska, Tract D-1, further described to be within Section 32, T. 74 S., R. 90 E., Copper River Meridian, in the vicinity of the Tongass Narrows near Ketchikan. The parcel has been appraised. The value of the reversionary interest will be based on the appraised fair market value. The land is currently owned by NTCC, but is restricted by a reversionary clause in the patent.

B. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative is to not sell the Federal reversionary interest to NTCC. The lands would remain in private ownership, and be managed for the purposes intended under the R&PP patent. NTCC would apply for a transfer of title and change of use. Should NTCC be successful in acquiring a waiver for the proposal, BLM would analyze a proposal similar, if not identical, to the Proposed Action under an R&PP change of use. Should they be successful, BLM would maintain a long-term compliance role, overseeing the Federal interest.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action:

Air Quality
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Environmental Justice
Farm Lands (Prime and Unique)
Floodplains
Native American Religious Concerns
Wastes, Solids and Hazardous Materials
Water Quality
Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Wild and Scenic Rivers
Wilderness

1. Cultural Resources:

There are no known cultural resources near the land affected by the Proposed Action or Alternative. No further consultation is necessary under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

2. T&E Species:

There are no rare or sensitive animal or plant species known to occur in the project area.

3. Subsistence:

The Proposed Action does not occur on Federal public lands as identified in ANILCA, Section 102(3) or fall under the regulatory authority of the Federal Subsistence Board. The Proposed Action does not occupy a site of significant size or productivity to produce a sustainable surplus of any subsistence resources. Therefore at this time, the Proposed Action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of subsistence resources, alter the distribution of subsistence resources, or limit subsistence user access from current existing conditions. No further analysis is necessary at this time.

B. Land Status:

The parcel is surrounded by private land. The parcel itself is considered private land, as it was patented under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. The Federal government reserved the reversionary interest. All known interested parties have been notified.

C. Vegetation:

Vegetation of the parcel is typical of the temperate Sitka spruce/western hemlock rain forest that occurs in the area. The understory is sparse and composed of mosses, shrubs and forbs. Much of the area has been previously disturbed.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Critical Element:

a. Invasive, Non-Native Species:

Due to encroaching urban developments surrounding the area, weedy invasive plant species are expected to increase in the more disturbed areas.

2. Vegetation:

Once the parcel is transferred, the entire 1.48 acres of vegetation could be permanently removed due to housing and parking lot construction.

Those soil areas disturbed, and not covered by housing or parking lots, could likely recolonize the first few years in weeds. Much of the adjacent areas are at different successional stages due to human influences. Each area would progress to a climax community in due time, if no other impacts would occur. The overall impacts on the integrity of the vegetation are expected to be minimal.

3. Socioeconomic:

Realigning the roadbed and constructing a bike and pedestrian path will assure an adequate, safe passage for the residents of Ketchikan.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

NTCC would continue to be impacted by the right-of-way and the additional easement needs by ADOT&PF. BLM would maintain a long-term compliance role, overseeing the Federal interest in these lands.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

There are no cumulative impacts identified for the Proposed Action.

D. Mitigation Measures:

There are no mitigation measures identified for the Proposed Action.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Theresa Hamilton, North Tongass Community Club, Inc.

B. List of Preparers:

Kathy Stubbs, Realty Specialist.
Jeff Denton, Subsistence Specialist/Biologist
Debbie Blank, Botanist
Donna Redding, Archaeologist
Bruce Seppi, Wildlife Biologist